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STATE FOR EAP/MLS
STATE PASS USTR DAVID BISBEE
COMMERCE FOR 4431/MAC/AP/OPB/VLC/HPPHO
TREASURY FOR OASIA

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED
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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: VIETNAM READY TO SIGN MARITIME AGREEMENT

SENSITIVE - DO NOT POST ON INTERNET

11. (SBU) The Director General of the Vietnam Ministry of Transport (MOT) Pham Thanh Tung informed Econoff on January 10 that the Government of Vietnam was ready to sign the U.S.-Vietnam Maritime Transport Agreement (MTA). "Internal formalities have been finalized and we are ready for signing," he said. Tung said MOT wished to arrange a signing during the U.S. visit of Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem. The GVN's preferred signatory remains the Vietnam Maritime Administration (VINAMARINE) Chairman Vuong Dinh Lam, he added.

12. (SBU) Comment: Given the tentative timing of Khiem's visit, Post plans to request that the MOT leave open the possibility of de-linking the signing from Khiem's trip. We will note that the joint statement issued by President Bush and President Triet in November 2006 asserted that both countries would seek to conclude the maritime agreement "at an early date." Furthermore, U.S. Maritime Administrator Sean Connaughton received verbal agreement from VINAMARINE during his visit to Hanoi for the APEC Summit that VINAMARINE would travel to the United States to sign the agreement "as soon as possible." End Comment.

MARINE